

## AFRICA OIL+GAS REPORT

# Nigeria Reshuffles Downstream Regulator Leadership with Dangote-Linked Appointment

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Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has removed Saidu Mohammed from his position as Authority Chief Executive (ACE) of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), replacing him with a former employee of the Dangote Group. The appointment signals a deliberate shift in regulatory orientation at one of Africa's most consequential downstream energy bodies, coming at a critical juncture as Nigeria works to restructure its petroleum sector following the removal of fuel subsidies and the gradual ramp-up of the Dangote Refinery.

The NMDPRA oversees licensing, tariff regulation, and operational compliance across Nigeria's midstream and downstream sectors — including pipelines, storage terminals, LPG distribution, and refined product imports. The choice of a candidate with direct industry experience at Dangote, Nigeria's largest private industrial conglomerate and operator of the 650,000-barrel-per-day Dangote Refinery in Lagos, is widely interpreted as an attempt to bring pragmatic, commercially-oriented leadership to a regulatory body that has historically struggled with enforcement capacity and bureaucratic inertia.

The timing is significant. Nigeria is in the midst of a sweeping downstream liberalisation effort, with private sector actors — including major international trading companies and domestic distributors — repositioning themselves to capture market share as the state-owned NNPC loses its monopoly grip on refined product

supply. The Dangote Refinery's phased commissioning has already disrupted traditional import flows, and the regulatory framework governing product pricing, pipeline access, and terminal licensing will be central to determining how the market evolves. A regulator with deep familiarity with large-scale refining and logistics operations could accelerate the development of clearer, more investable rules of engagement.

For international service companies and infrastructure investors monitoring Nigeria, the leadership change at NMDPRA is more than a personnel reshuffle. Regulatory clarity in the midstream and downstream space directly affects the commercial viability of pipeline rehabilitation projects, LPG terminal investments, and product distribution infrastructure — all areas where Norwegian and European contractors and technology providers have demonstrated competence. The new ACE's background suggests an appetite for outcomes-driven regulation, which could shorten approval timelines and reduce the uncertainty that has historically deterred foreign participation in Nigeria's downstream build-out.

Observers will be watching closely for early signals from the new leadership: whether the NMDPRA moves to accelerate licensing backlogs, revise pipeline access frameworks, or engage more constructively with private terminal operators. Nigeria's downstream sector remains one of the largest and most complex in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the regulatory environment is a primary lever for unlocking the billions of dollars in midstream infrastructure investment the country requires to reduce product import dependency and monetise its refining capacity.

### **Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga**

Norwegian pipeline and terminal service companies should monitor this appointment as a potential inflection point for regulatory clarity in Nigeria's midstream space, where licensing and access frameworks have long been barriers to entry. Companies active in LPG infrastructure, pipeline integrity, and storage terminal engineering should consider early engagement with the new NMDPRA leadership to position for upcoming project approvals. This is a monitor-and-prepare moment rather than an immediate bid opportunity.

## PARTNER ANGLES

- **Pipeline:** Track whether new NMDPRA leadership accelerates licensing for Nigeria's long-delayed pipeline rehabilitation and expansion tenders, where Norwegian integrity and inspection firms could compete.
- **LNG:** Regulatory reform under a commercially-minded ACE may improve the framework for LPG terminal licensing, creating openings for Norwegian process and storage technology providers.
- **FPSO:** Clearer midstream regulations downstream of offshore production could reduce offtake uncertainty for FPSO operators supplying the Dangote refinery complex.
- **Service:** A regulator with private-sector Dangote experience may be more receptive to performance-based compliance frameworks, benefiting Norwegian metering and measurement service companies seeking Nigerian contracts.
- **Subsea:** Improved midstream governance could support progress on coastal and nearshore pipeline projects connecting offshore production to onshore refining, a segment where Norwegian subsea contractors have relevant expertise.

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